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LAKESIDE LUAU BENEFITS SHINING HOPE FARMS AND CELEBRATES HIPPO THERAPY PARTICIPANT

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On a beautiful summer evening dozens gathered at the incredible Mountain Island lake home of Jeff and Patty Mulloy to support Shining Hope Farms. Following the Luau theme for the gathering, H&M catering created hors d'oeuvres and desserts with a Polynesian flare. Our Shining Hope Farms' Board Chair, Kari Pilbeam, gave an informative and moving presentation about the benefits of Hippotherapy, Therapeutic Horseback Riding, and the need for donations to provide these life changing services. Guests at the Luau also enjoyed the tranquil view of the lake and even went for pontoon boat rides. But the one who melted everyone's hearts was Noah, one of our participants who attended the Luau and let us tell his story.

Noah was born at 25 weeks and weighed 1 lb. 15 oz. Shortly after birth Noah had a stroke. He was diagnosed with prematurity, developmental delay, and significant gastro intestinal complications as an infant, resulting in the need for a feeding tube. Not long after his second birthday, Noah began receiving Occupational Therapy services at Shining Hope Farms, which utilized Hippotherapy (from the Greek "hippo" meaning "horse") as a treatment strategy. When Noah first began, he was unable to stand or walk on his own. Due to these impairments, Noah also had a difficult time interacting with his family and peers during play and was unable to feed himself.

Noah is now five years old and has been receiving Occupational Therapy for 3 years. During that time Noah has improved his core strength, balance and normalized his tone allowing him to stand and take 10 – 20 steps with one hand assistance. These improvements have also enabled him to maintain his position on his horse. The horse that Noah rides for his treatment sessions is Captain Hook, or Cappy for short.


Aside from riding Cappy, one of Noah's favorite tasks at the farm is feeding Cappy a snack. This activity has led to Noah experiencing new textures, allowing him to expand his tolerance outside of the farm, especially when it comes to eating. Noah has gone from a minimal amount of food intake to now having 16 different food/textures implemented in his diet. The result of this is that he no longer requires the feeding tube as his primary source of nutrition.


Noah's home life has improved as well as a result of his fine motor gains at Shining Hope Farms including the ability to grasp feeding utensils so that he can feed himself and color using crayons. Also as a result of his sensory improvements Noah has been able to enjoy the beach with his family and is no longer bothered by the sand.

Noah's mom says, "Coming to Shining Hope Farms to ride Cappy and to visit the wonderful staff is the highlight of Noah's week. Noah was barely able to sit up on his own when he first came to the farm for Hippotherapy. Today because of Hippotherapy, his muscles are significantly stronger and he is cruising and learning to walk on his own. Peace surrounds our family as soon as we enter the farm. We are so grateful to have such a remarkable place for Noah to come to. He tells everyone he meets about the farm and Cappy. Noah would not be where is or who he is today without the people and horses of Shining Hope Farms."

We applaud Noah and all of our 160+ participants on their accomplishments, dedication, and hard work. If you would like to help children like Noah check out our website at **ShiningHopeFarms.org** (<http://www.shininghopefarms.org>) to find out how you can make a difference. Also like us on Facebook (@shininghopefarms), Instagram (@shininghopefarms) and Twitter (@shininghopefarm).

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